

NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



GOVERNOR TO UNVEIL FIRST STATE BRIDGE HONORING SOUTH DAKOTA HERO

Governor Kristi Noem is set to unveil South Dakota's new state bridge naming program for South Dakota Veterans who died in combat.

Naming of the first bridge and dedication will be held Tuesday afternoon, November 26, at 1:30 pm (MT) in Hot Springs. The site of the dedication is US 38/North River Street over the Fall River, and near the Fall River County Court House.

The South Dakota Department of the Military, the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, and the South Dakota Department of Transportation have been working with Governor Noem on this project and will be working collectively to carry out this mission as it moves forward.

Each year six state bridges will be named for veterans who died in combat. The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs has developed an application form and will be working closely with County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers and Veterans Service Organizations to identify heroes in respective regions.

"This is a daily reminder of the heroism and sacrifices made through the years by all of our veterans," said South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Greg Whitlock. "We are proud to honor our heroes. Their courage and dedication set a lasting example for all of us."

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SD GUARDSMAN CARRIES ON TRADITION THROUGH SERVICE

For some, the military is a way to see the world while learning the skills to become successful in life. However, for one South Dakota Army National Guard Soldier it is about so much more. For Spc. Jacey Garcia it is about continuing a family legacy and helping the community where he grew up.

"My family has been in the military for as long as I can track back. My father was in Vietnam, my uncle and grandfather were in the Marines, and my father's uncle was in Korea," said Garcia. "All the way back to my great-great-grandfathers we were always warriors."

Garcia is a member of the 155th Engineer Company in Wagner, where he serves as an interior electrician. He chose to be an electrician to gain skills to help him fix things around the house and have a skillset to put on a resume.

Outside the National Guard, he is pursuing his degree in education from Black Hills State University in Spearfish. Garcia says the military has given him the skills to be successful in his first year of school.

Garcia is a member of the Yankton Sioux Tribe. In recognition of Native American Heritage Month, he took some time to explain the importance of the observance to him and his people.

"It's really important for people to know the history of our country. It is good to recognize our mistakes from the past - the way that Native Americans were treated was wrong," Garcia said. "Having a month dedicated to Native American people is important because it gives us the opportunity to learn and talk about our history. It gives Native Americans a bigger stage to share our culture."

Garcia recognizes that the National Guard allows him to be a role model and a voice for the people on the reservations. He believes that it is important to use his position in the military to help the people from where he is from.

"I think it's important to understand that there are all types of people in the world and they all struggle in different ways," said Garcia. "It is important for us to use our voices for good. I want to learn as much as I can and do the best possible for my community."

Garcia chose the National Guard so that he could help the people from the community where he grew up.

The National Guard has been a benefit Garcia said. He reflected back on the types of people he has met during his time in the National Guard.

"Before I went to basic training, I was only around Native Americans and white Americans in my community. I didn't have very many relationships with different types of people," said Garcia. "The military has allowed me to get past mental and social barriers towards other people that I had growing up. Some of my best friends in basic training were people that were completely different than me."

Garcia says helping people in his community is what he enjoys the most about being in the National Guard.

"The feeling you get and how you can make someone else feel by helping them leaves an impression on you," said Garcia. "If I help somebody, and they really benefit, it gets me motivated to go out and do it again."

VA USES INNOVATIVE MEANS TO HELP REDUCE DIABETIC LIMB LOSS

November is National Diabetes Month and as part of broader efforts by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to confront diabetes, Dec. 1, the VA will begin regional implementation of the [Podimetrics Mat](#), a new medical device that has the potential to prevent limb loss in veterans with diabetes.

The technology, now in use at 15 VA medical centers, uses thermographic monitoring of a patient's feet to identify early onset of diabetic foot ulcers (DFUs), which can lead to limb loss if not detected early.

Known as thermal imaging, the non-invasive test involves no radiation and uses a special camera to measure skin temperature. This allows clinicians to develop plans for preventing added deterioration of a patient's health.

"The VA's early adoption of cutting edge, innovative solutions to combat a disease that impacts so many veterans is another example of how the VA is aiming to be a leader in health care innovation," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "The VA is uniquely positioned in its ability to test and quickly scale new solutions throughout its health care system, which can drastically change veteran lives."

The VA's use of the Podimetrics Mat builds on a 2017 VA-led [study](#) at the Phoenix VA and the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare Systems. The study showed the in-home foot-temperature monitoring device was able to detect 97% of DFUs as early as five weeks before the onset of symptoms, with 86% of participants using the mat an average of three days per week. With more medical centers offering use of the mat, the VA has continued to observe similar outcomes. One VA facility found 84% of veterans are using the mat almost daily, allowing preventative clinical interventions to take place.

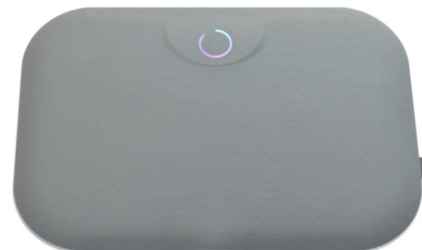
The mat will be available to all veterans across the country through their local Prevention of Amputations for Veterans Everywhere clinic providers. In addition, the VA's [Veterans Health Administration Innovation Ecosystem](#) is implementing a pilot program of the mats at the VA facilities in the southeast, where some of the highest DFU rates exist.

Through the effort, the VA will be able to further evaluate best practices and optimize care models, ultimately improving the effectiveness of the technology in the VA health care system. Last year, the VA treated more than 75,000 DFU cases across the country.

Introducing the Remote Temperature Monitoring System™

A Smart, Connected Foot Mat

The Podimetrics Mat™ is a wireless, in-home monitoring technology that collects foot temperature scans. Step on it for twenty seconds a day and we'll take care of the rest. Your toes will thank you.



QUILTS GALORE PRESENTED TO OUR MJFSVH HEROES



Veterans at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home were honored by the local Hot Springs Quilting Guild.

Members of the Guild presented 16 of our heroes with red, white, and blue patriotic quilts.



The quilter's goal is to present as many veterans as possible throughout the year with quilts honoring their selfless service to our nation.



POP UP SHOP AT MJFSVH

This week the South Dakota American Legion Auxiliaries set up their annual pop-up Christmas gift shop at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home.

Members of the auxiliary bring in gift items for the veterans to shop for holiday gifts for their family members. The gifts are then wrapped and sent to addresses provided by the residents.

Special thanks to the auxiliaries for taking on this great project and for taking care of our heroes and their families.





WATERTOWN VA CLINIC GRAND OPENING

Open House

December 5, 2019

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

4 19th Street NE

Watertown, SD

Refreshments will be served.

INFO ABOUT THE MOVE TO THE NEW LOCATION

The new VA outpatient clinic will open Thursday, November 21.

We invite Veterans, their families, Veterans Service Officers, community residents, and anyone interested in VA services to come to the open house on December 5.

VA staff will provide tours of the new clinic, and info will be available about Veterans health care at the clinic and the Sioux Falls VA Health Care System. Veterans who are not enrolled for care are encouraged to visit to learn what's available for them.

VA RENEWS PARTNERSHIP WITH Y-USA TO EXPAND WHOLE-HEALTH SERVICES

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently renewed a nationwide partnership with [Y-USA](#) that focuses on whole health to enhance services available that promote the health and well-being of veterans, their families and caregivers.

In the next phase of the partnership, renewed Oct. 1, the VA and YMCA of the USA — the national entity that oversees YMCA facilities across the country — will share ideas and success stories to expand the program at the local level.

“This partnership will bring together local YMCAs’ expertise in strengthening the community through healthy living and social responsibility with the VA’s highest health care standards for veterans,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “Partnerships provide opportunities for physical fitness, social integration and community service that address what veterans are seeking.”

VA, Vet Centers and local YMCAs are working together to increase awareness about YMCA programs — including community events, whole-health groups, veterans benefits and services clinics, and youth activities — by creating a toolkit of best practices and resources for local YMCAs.

The partners will also develop a pilot collaboration program between local YMCAs and Mobile Vet Centers and community-based counseling centers that provide a wide range of social and mental health services. The VA will support and encourage its local and national offices and medical facilities to enter into agreements with YMCAs to provide programming and services targeting the veteran population.

Y-USA will share information, resources and spaces such as meeting rooms with the VA to facilitate veteran outreach events and services outside of VA facilities. Y-USA will also work to integrate veterans and their families into social, volunteer and mentorship programs.

This partnership is coordinated through the Veterans Health Administration, (VHA) Office of Community Engagement (OCE), a trusted resource and a catalyst for collaboration at the national, state and community levels. [Partnerships](#) coordinated by OCE support VHA’s commitment to delivering personalized, proactive, patient-driven health care.



RAPID CITY COMPANY RECEIVES NATIONAL AWARD FOR EMPLOYING VETERANS

The United States Secretary of Labor Eugene Scalia has announced that Black Hills Patrol, a Rapid City based private security contractor, has been awarded the HIRE Vets Platinum Medallion, the highest recognition that is given for the employment of veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States by the Department of Labor. [The Honoring Investments in Recruiting and Employing American Military Veterans Act of 2017](#) (HIRE Vets Act), was signed by President Trump on May 5, 2017, and requires the Secretary of Labor to establish a program that recognizes employer efforts to recruit, employ, and retain veterans. The Medallion is awarded in both the Gold and Platinum levels, based on criteria that include percentage of veterans hired and retained; and programs offered to veterans once employed. Black Hills Patrol is the first and only South Dakota employer to receive either gold or platinum medallion status under the national program.

Black Hills Patrol Co-owner Julia Orrock said the employment of veterans has been a priority of the company since its founding in 2010. "As the granddaughter, daughter and wife of combat veterans who have served in the U.S. Navy and U.S. Army, I value not only the sacrifices veterans have made for our country; but the contributions

veterans make to our community after their time in uniform has ended. Veterans bring a professionalism and dedication that makes them ideal employees in our industry." Co-owner Brent Borresen feels the same, "Veterans come in the door with skills and knowledge that may take years to develop in employees who didn't serve. Black Hills Patrol's reputation for customer service and professionalism is personified in our prior service employees."

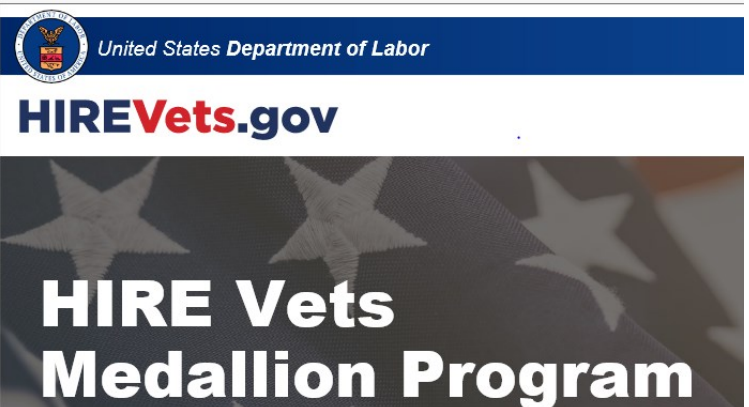
Black Hills Patrol was previously recognized by the South Dakota American Legion as its Employer of the Year and has been recognized twice with the Patriotic Employer Award by the U.S. Secretary of Defense through the Office for Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve. Black Hills Patrol currently employs veterans from all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces, as well as members of the South Dakota, Nebraska and Wyoming Air and Army National Guard. Black Hills Patrol provides security officer and patrol services throughout western South Dakota.

Additional information about the U.S. Department of Labor HIRE Vets program can be found at:

<https://www.hirevets.gov>

Additional information about Black Hills Patrol can be found at:

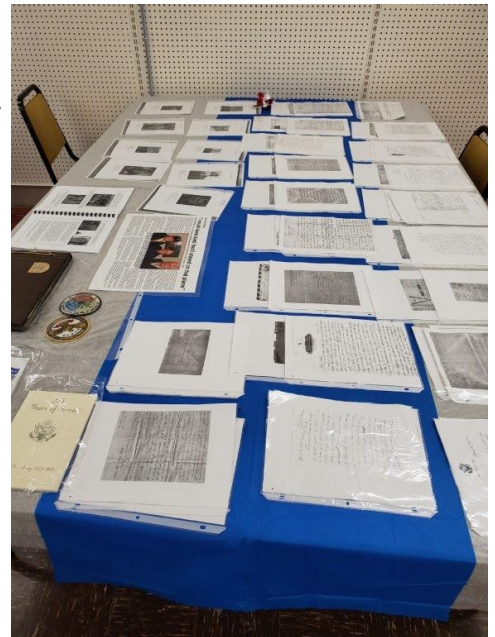
<https://www.blackhillspatrol.com>



VETERANS DAY IN DAY COUNTY



Kudos and a big SHOUT OUT to Susan Meier, the Webster Arts Council, and the Day County VSO office for the outstanding display they compiled for Veterans Day - "Lest we Forget." The display included veteran's letters, bios, awards, medals discharge papers, news articles, posters, and maps. The display included post war, coming home, in battle, industry's role, service at home, USO, war time, peace time, signing up to serve.



WILKIE PRAISES HCVA LEADERS' END-OF-YEAR SUICIDE PREVENTION GOAL

VA Secretary Robert Wilkie praised members of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Wednesday for setting the goal of getting important veterans suicide prevention legislation passed before the end of the year.

Wilkie appeared before HCVA today to testify in support of [H.R. 3495](#), the Improve Well-Being for Veterans Act. The bipartisan bill, which currently has 228 cosponsors, would allow the VA to offer direct grants to veterans service organizations, caregivers and nonprofits at the state and local level, letting these groups use grants to tailor aid to the veterans in their communities for the purposes of suicide prevention.

While HCVA leaders are still finalizing the precise legislative vehicle and language through which to accomplish the goals of H.R. 3495, HVAC Chairman Mark Takano during the hearing expressed support for getting final legislation passed in 2019.

"I do want to get this legislation passed before the end of the year," [Takano said](#).

After the hearing, Secretary Wilkie released the following statement: "To reach the roughly 60 percent of veterans who die by suicide each day without any recent connection to VA care, the government needs to reach far beyond its walls and work with as many partners as it can. I am fighting for legislation that would give the VA the ability to do just that, and I am encouraged Chairman Takano shares my goal of getting the legislation passed before the end of the year."

HONOR FLIGHT BANQUET

SDDVA Program Manager Erin Brown hosted an informational booth last Saturday at the Midwest Honor Flight Missions 1-6 Reunion in Sioux Falls.

With 325 veterans and family members in attendance, Brown had the opportunity to visit with them about veterans benefits, services and programs.



MJFSVH ARTIST IN RESIDENCE PROGRAM

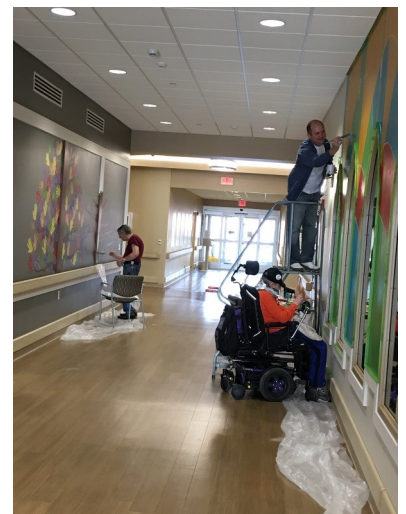


The Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home and their residents are actively involved in two programs through the South Dakota Arts Council - "Artists in Residence" and the "Art for Life." Artists work side-by-side with our veterans on such projects as cartoon drawings, hoop star dancing, wall painting, and storytelling.

Artist Markus Tracy is pictured here with some of our heroes working on art projects on main street square at the Home.

Art for Life seeks to improve the residents' physical and emotional health through intensive art and artist interaction. Art for Life activities are rooted in tradition and storytelling.

Salvador Dali once said, "A true artist is not one who is inspired, but one who inspires others."



UPCOMING EVENTS

Nov 26—Bridge Dedication—Hot Springs—1:30 pm (MT)
Nov 27—VA Stakeholders Meeting—Sioux Falls VAHCS—10:30 am (CT)
Nov 28-29—State Offices Closed
Dec 3—Governor Noem’s Budget Address
Dec 4—SD Veterans Council Legislative Round Table—DAV Headquarters—Sioux Falls—Noon (CT)
Dec 5—SD Veterans Council Legislative Round Table—American Legion Post 17—Watertown—Noon (CT)
Dec 7—SD Veterans Council Legislative Round Table—VFW—Rapid City—10:00 am (MT)
Dec 9—Wreaths Across America Wreath Laying Ceremony—Flaming Fountain Veterans Memorial at Capitol Lake in Pierre—11:00 am (CT)
Dec 11—Sioux Falls VA Stakeholders Conference Call
Dec 23-25—State Offices Closed

2020

Jan 1—State Offices Closed
Jan 14—State of the State Address
Jan 15—SD Veterans Council Legislative Reception
Feb 21-23—American Legion Mid Winter Conference—Arrowwood Resort and Conference Center—Oacoma
Mar 25—SD Veterans Council Meeting—PVA Headquarters—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)
Mar 27-29—SD Vietnam and Era Veterans Reunion—Dakota Sioux Casino—Watertown
May 15-17—DAV State Convention—Brookings
May 30—Midwest Honor Flight—Mission 7
Jun 18-21—American legion State Convention—Huron
Sep 10—Midwest Honor Flight—Mission 8 (Tentative)
Oct 11—Midwest Honor Flight—Mission 9 (Tentative)



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